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THE OBSERVATOR.

An Old News Letter, for want of a New one.

From **Wednesday** August the 30th, to **Saturday** September the 2d, 1704.

Country-m. MAſter *Obſervator*, you have been at *London*; pray what News have you pick'd up?

Obſ. Not one Word of News.

Country-m. Why then I had better ha' gone my ſelf, how ſhall we paſs the time away?

Obſ. I'll Read thee an old News Letter.

Country-m. An old News Letter; that's the *Cows* Husband, a perfect *Bull*.

Obſ. 'Tis a News Letter, above 1000 Years Old, Written by *Marcus Aurelius* to his Friend *Catullus*, concerning News at that time in *Rome*.

Country-m. Let's hear it, 'tis News to me; but don't Read in that crabbed Language.

Obſ. I'll contract it into *Engliſh* for your Edification.

Marcus *the new Cenſor, to* Catullus *now Aged, ſendeth Greeting.*

TEN Days ago I received thy Letter in the Temple of *Janus*, whom I call to Witneſs that I had rather have ſeen thy Perſon. Thou deſireſt my Letters may be long, but want of time compels me to make them ſhorter than I would. To Anſwer thy Expectation of knowing the preſent Occurrences, I ſhall not be ſo able as I could have been, if thou hadſt deſired to be inform'd, whether any thing that was *Good* and *Old* is yet remaining amongſt us in *Italy*.

For, by our Evil Deſtiny, all that was *Good* and *Old* is ended, and *New* things, which are Evil, do now begin to take place. The Emperour, the Conſuls, the Senators, the Ædites, the Flamins, the Tribunes, the Prætors, the Centurions, and almoſt all things are new, ſave the Vertues, which are grown Obſolete.

We paſs the time in making new Offices, in forming new Projects and Councels, in raiſing new Subſidies and Taxes, and there have been more Novelties introduc'd in four Years, than in four Hundred heretofore.

We now Aſſemble three hundred to Conſult in *Capitol*, and there we Brag and Boaſt, Sweat and Promiſe, that we will Exalt the Vertuous, Depoſe the Vicious, Favour the Right, not Wink at Wrongs, Puniſh Evil, Reward the Good, Repair the Old, Edifie the New, Pluck Vices up by the Roots, Plant Virtues, follow that which is Good, Reprove Tyrants, and Relieve the Poor and Oppreſſed; but, when we are gone from thence, they who ſpake the beſt Words, commit the worſt Deeds.

The Senators paſs away their Time in ſaying *We will do, We will do*, but every Man ſeeks his own Profit, and forgets both private Mens Injuries and the Weal Publick. I often hear in the Senate, much Eloquence in Words, fair ſhew of Zeal for Juſtice, and much ſpoken in Juſtification of themſelves; But when I come Abroad I am aſham'd to ſee their Evil Works, with their Cruel Extortions, and find it to be very frequent for thoſe who commit the greateſt Crimes, to be moſt ſevere in giving Sentence againſt others for the ſame Offences.

We behold our own Faults in Mirrors, which make them ſeem leſs, and other Mens in Multiplying Glaſſes, making them appear greater. Oh! How many have I ſeen Condemned in the Senate, for one Fault committed but once in their Life Time, when the Senators themſelves commit the ſame Faults and worſe every Hour.

I have Read that in the Time of *Alexander* the Great, there was a Famous Pirate called *Dionides*, who Robbing all Ships he could meet withal, *Alexander* ſet forth a great Navy to apprehend him, whom having taken and preſented to *Alexander*, the King ſaid unto him: *Why* Dionides, *doſt thou Rob on the Seas ſo that no Ship can Sail in Safety for thee?* The Pirate anſwer'd, *If I ſpoil by Sea, why doſt thou ſpoil both by Sea and Land.* Oh Alexander! *Becauſe I Fight with one ſingle Ship at Sea, I am called a* Pirate, *and becauſe thou Robbeſt with two Hundred Ships at Sea, and troubleſt all the World with two Hundred Thouſand Men by Land, thou art call d an Emperor. I ſwear unto thee* Alexander, *if the Gods were ſo favourable to me, as they are to thee, and ſo Adverſe to thee, as now they are to me, and would give me thine Empire, and beſtow on thee my little Ship, perhaps I ſhould be a better Emperour than thou art, and thou would'ſt be a worſe* Pirate *than I.* The bold Speech pleaſed *Alexander* ſo well, that he made him General of a great Army, and he became more Vertuous by Land than he was Vicious at Sea. Now, in *Italy*, theſe who Rob openly, are called **Lords**, and they who Rob privately, are called **Thieves.**

I have Read in the Annals of *Livy*, that there came an Ambaſſador from *Spain* to *Rome*, to treat of a Peace with the *Romans*, which Ambaſſador proved, before the Senate, that he had been Rob'd ten Times of his Goods, whilſt he had been in *Rome*, and that he had ſeen one of thoſe that Rob'd him, Hang another that Defended him, and ſeeing ſuch a Wicked Action, he took a Coal, and Wrot upon the Gibbet theſe Words. *Oh Gibbet, thou art Planted among Thieves, art made by Thieves, and art Hanged full of Innocents. The whole Hiſtory, wherein theſe Words were found, was Written with Black Ink, and theſe Words in Vermillion Letters.*

I cannot tell what other News to ſend thee; but every thing here is ſo new and tender, and is joyn'd with ſuch ill Cement, that I fear all will ſhortly fall ſuddenly in pieces; ſome are ſo haſtily and ſo highly Promoted, that I dare aſſure thee rather of their fall, than of their Lives and firm ſtanding; we have already ſeen many, at whoſe Promotion we wonder'd, and as much Marvelled at their ſuddain fall.

We have ſeen *Cincius Fulvius*, in one Year made Conſul, his Children Tribunes, his Wife Matron

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to the Virgins, and also Keepress of the *Capitol*, and after that, not in one Year, but the same Day, have we seen *Cincius* Beheaded in the Place, his Children Drowned in the *Tyber*, his Wife Banished, his House raised to the Ground, and all his Goods Confiscate to the Common Treasury; and this Rigorous Example we have not Read of in a Book, but have seen with our Eyes that we might the better take Notice of it.

Since I have begun, and thou art in a Foreign Country, I will write all the News that is here. This Year, the 25th of *May*, an Ambassador came out of *Asia*, who considering it would be dangerous Sailing Home in the Winter, and seeing, after long stay, his Business was not dispatch'd (being a Man of good Courage and Zealous of the Affairs of his Country) coming one Day to the Senate, and seeing the Senators enter the Capitol unarm'd (as the Custom is of laying by their Arms) he spake thus in the Presence of all the Senators. Fathers Conscript, *I am come to* Rome *from a far Country, and have found* Rome *without* Rome; *the Fame of the Place brought me not hither, but the Renown of those that Govern it; I came not to see the Sacred Senate, out of which should Issue Counsel for all Men. I came not to see you because you were Conquerors of other Nations, but because I thought you were more Vertuous than all others: But, I dare say, except the Gods have made me Blind, or taken away my Understanding, either you are not* Romans *of* Rome, *or this is not* Rome *of the* Romans *your Predecessors; We have heard that the Kingdoms Conquered by their Valour, were preserved by the Wisdom of their Senate; but methinks you are more likely to lose, than to keep what your Fathers got. For their Excellence was in reallities, and you Consume your time in Compliments, and vain Ceremonies: I have almost Kill'd my self with Laughing at you, to see with what Punctuallity you leave off those Arms at the Senate Gate, with which your Ancestors Defended the Empire. What avails it your Suppliants, that you lay off those Arms, which may hurt One, and put on those which destroy the* whole World? *What avails it us, that you enter the Senate without Sword and Dagger, while you are Armed with Malice in your Hearts? Know,* Ye Romans, *we dread you not as Armed Captains, but as Malicious Senators; we fear not your Swords and Daggers, but your Hearts and Tongues. It were less Injury if going Armed into the Senate you took away our Lives, than to suffer Innocents to be destroy'd, by not Dispatching their Affairs. I understand not what you intend, nor can suffer, with Patience, what I see you do. Now whether your Arms are taken from you as Fools or Madmen. I know not: If it be done because you are Fools, surely it is not the Law of the Gods that three Hundred Fools should Govern three Hundred thousand Wise Men. I have tarry'd here for my Answer a long time and by your Delays I am further from a Dispatch than I was the first Day I came: We bring you hither Honey, Oyl, Saffron, Wood, Salt and Silver, and you send us away to seek Justice elsewhere; you have one Law whereby to gather your Tributes, and another whereby to determine Justice. For we must Pay our Tribues in one Day, but you will not Discharge our Business in a whole Year. Either take away our Lives, that our Business may have an end, or hear our Complaints, that we may live to serve you. If you think my Words extravagant, and find them Offensive, so you will do Justice to my Country, take away my Life; and so I conclude.*

These were his Words, *Catullus*, which I got in Writing, and may now say that the same Boldness and High-Spirit, which *Romans* exercised heretofore in other Countries, Strangers now dare to express in *Rome*. For this Speech some would have had him Punish'd; but the Gods forbid that any Man should suffer for speaking the Truth in my Presence; seeing it more than enough that Men suffer, tho' we then Persecute them not, when they boldly inform us of their Grievances. The Sheep cannot be preserved from Wolves, if the Shepherds Dogs Bark not; and there is no Law of the Gods or Mans, that awardeth Punishments for Liars, that will permit any one should be Punished for speaking the Truth.

Yet now, Men are Chastised more for murmurring against one Senator, than for Blaspheming all the Gods at once. We need not seek to the Gods in our Temples; For, the Senators take upon them to be Gods; but there is great Difference betwixt them: For, the Gods do nothing that is Evil, and the Senators nothing that is Good: The Gods never Lie, and the Senators never speak Truth: The Gods Pardon often, and they never Forgive: The Gods are contented to be Honoured five times in a Year, and the Senators would be Worshipp'd ten times in a Day: The Gods are Constant in every thing, and Fail in nothing: The Senators are Stedfast in nothing, and Fail in all things: And when they intend not to mend their Faults, they cannot endure their Suppliants should inform them of the Truth.

But, be it as it may be; this I am sure of, that it is impossible for them to be Just, or sincerly to apply themselves to any Virtue, who withdraw their Ears from Listening to the Truth: And no Mortal Man, be he an Orator, or Consul, or Censor, or Emperour, how well so e'er he takes heed to his Ways, and orders Desires, but he shall otherwhile have need of some Reproof or Counsel.

Now I have Written concerning others, I will inform thee of somewhat concerning my self, because thou desiredst it. Know that in the Calends of *January*, I was made Censor in the Senate, which I neither desired, nor deserve. No Wise Man will Spontaneously take upon himself the Burden and Charge of looking after other Mens Affairs: For 'tis an hard Task to please every Man in such an Office, and he who undertakes it, must often make shew in Countenance of that which is not in his Heart. Good Men only ought to be put into Office, and in the Eighth Table of our Antient Laws, it is enjoined *That Charge of Justice be never given to him who seeks or desires it, but that Men be chosen to such Places with great deliberation, because few Men are so Vertuous and Loving to their Country, as to take Offices upon themselves, so much for the Benefit of other Men, as for their own Profit and Advantage.* Unhappy *Rome*! if I be one of those that best deserve such an Office, I had no need of it, but accepted thereof to fulfil the Command of *Antonius*, my Grandfather, and to be Obedient to the Senate, who had thereto Elected me of their own Accord, *&c.*

Here, Honest *Country-man*, you see how Affairs went in *Rome* above a thousand Year ago, when that Famous Empire was in its Declension, for when the Senate, who should be the Stay and Support of the Common-wealth, became Corrupt and Vicious, any one might Judge and Determine the Fate of *Rome*.

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